

External Examining Policy and Procedures

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Goldsmiths considers its arrangements for external examining to be an integral and important part of its quality assurance system and is committed to ensuring the presence of at least one independent and appropriately qualified external representative examiner on each of its Examination Boards.
- 1.2 The primary aims of the Goldsmiths' external examining system are to ensure:
 - 1.2.1 It is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications, applicable subject benchmark statements and, where appropriate, with the requirements of relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.
 - 1.2.2 The assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with Goldsmiths' policies and regulations.
 - 1.2.3 The academic standards and the achievements of students are, notwithstanding variations in course content, comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the External Examiners have experience.
 - 1.2.4 The quality of the learning opportunities provided to students on its programmes and courses are enhanced.
 - 1.2.5 Good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment is developed.

2 Nomination and Appointment of External Examiners

2.1 Nomination of External Examiners

- 2.1.1 Nominations for the appointment of External Examiners are the responsibility of the relevant academic department
- 2.1.2 Nominations for the appointment of External Examiners must be submitted to the Quality Office for approval by Academic Board no later than the Autumn Term prior to the meeting of the Board of Examiners held in the Summer Term or in the following Autumn Term.
- 2.1.3 Nominations should be submitted on the standard form provided by the Quality Office.

2.2 Criteria for the Suitability of External Examiners

- 2.2.1 In nominating External Examiners consideration should be given to the balance of the expertise of the members of the Board of Examiners.
- 2.2.2 External Examiners may be:
- an Intercollegiate Examiner who is a member of the academic staff of a College of the University of London, provided no students from that College are being examined with the Goldsmiths' cohort;
 - an External Examiner who is an examiner from outside the University of London who is not a member of staff of any College of the University of London.
- 2.2.3 Boards of Examiners must include at least one External Examiner from outside the University of London. There is no requirement to have an Intercollegiate Examiner, although this is desirable.
- 2.2.4 Where possible, it is preferable that an External Examiner for programmes delivered at Goldsmiths is also appointed as the External Examiner for cognate programmes leading to validated awards of Goldsmiths delivered at partner institutions.
- 2.2.5 Goldsmiths applies criteria for the appointment of External Examiners to ensure their independence in line with the guidance set out in the as set out in the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Advice and Guidance: External Expertise <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/external-expertise>):

2.3 Person Specification

- 2.3.1 External Examiners should be able to show appropriate evidence of

- 2.3.2 knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
- 2.3.3 competence and experience in the fields covered by the programme of study, or parts thereof;
- 2.3.4 relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;
- 2.3.5 competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures;
- 2.3.6 sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic peers and, where appropriate, professional peers;
- 2.3.7 familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;
- 2.3.8 fluency in English, and where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) (unless other secure arrangements are in place to ensure that External Examiners are provided with the information to make their judgements);
- 2.3.9 meeting applicable criteria set by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies;
- 2.3.10 awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;
- 2.3.11 competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.
- 2.3.12 Where the nominee has no previous experience as an External Examiner for any institution, the appointment should, wherever possible, be made to a team of External Examiners and/or with agreement that a more experienced External Examiner will act as a mentor. The details of the mentoring scheme are set out in section 3 of this handbook.

2.4 Conflicts of Interest

- 2.4.1 To avoid any conflict of interest, anyone in the following categories or circumstances should not be appointed as an External Examiner:
- 2.4.2 a member of a governing body or committee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners;

- 2.4.3 anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;
- 2.4.4 anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study;
- 2.4.5 anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study;
- 2.4.6 anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or modules in question;
- 2.4.7 former staff or students of the institution unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the External Examiner have completed their programme(s);
- 2.4.8 a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution;
- 2.4.9 the succession of an External Examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and institution;
- 2.4.10 the appointment of more than one External Examiner from the same department of the same institution.
- 2.4.11 Nominees who have been employed as an external reader in the approval of a programme are not automatically debarred from immediate appointment as an External Examiner to that programme. However, departments should balance the benefits of engaging someone who is familiar with the programme and its rationale with any risk to their ability to provide a fully independent perspective.
- 2.4.12 External Examiners are required to inform Goldsmiths as soon as possible should any conflict of interest arise during their term of office.

2.5 Terms of office

- 2.5.1 The duration of an External Examiner's appointment will be for four years, extensions will not be granted other than in exceptional circumstances, and then for no longer than one year to ensure continuity where a programme is being brought to an end.
- 2.5.2 An External Examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.
- 2.5.3 External Examiners may normally hold no more than two External Examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.

2.6 Exemptions to the Criteria

- 2.6.1 Exemptions from the criteria will only be approved where exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. In these instances, a fully argued case should be made by the Head of Department on the nomination form.
- 2.6.2 When an External Examiner drawn from business, industry or the professions possesses considerable professional experience but not the formal qualifications anticipated, the academic background, or sufficient experience of assessment, they may be considered as exceptions. In such circumstances they should not be the sole External Examiner for the award and should be complemented by others who do satisfy the criteria. They should be appointed with a mentor in the first year, the details of which are set out in section 3 of this handbook, and the department should continue to provide appropriate support in relation to academic expectations throughout the term of office.

2.7 Approval of Nominations

- 2.7.1 Nominations should be submitted to the Quality Assurance Manager, who will refer them to the Deputy Warden for approval and subsequent reporting to Academic Board. While a Head of Department should seek the nominee's agreement in order to put their name forward, under no circumstances should a commitment to an appointment be made by the Department in advance of the decision of the Academic Board or of its Chair on its behalf.

2.8 Early Termination of Appointment

- 2.8.1 If an External Examiner is unable to continue in their role, they should confirm their resignation from the position in writing to the Head of Department who, in turn, should notify the Quality Office. External Examiners are requested to give at least six months notice of their intention to resign in order to allow sufficient time for a replacement to be found.
- 2.8.2 If, whilst serving their notice period, the resignation of the External Examiner is withdrawn before the appointment of a replacement has been arranged, then the External Examiner may, with the agreement of the relevant academic department, continue in their role. In these circumstances the maximum duration of the appointment will remain unchanged.
- 2.8.3 Goldsmiths will consider prematurely terminating an External Examiner's appointment if:
- their annual report is incomplete or has not been submitted; or
 - they have not attended the meetings of the Board of Examiners; or
 - they are subsequently found to be ineligible for appointment; or
 - a new conflict of interest arises following a change of role of the External Examiner.

- 2.8.4 In such circumstances the Chair of the Board of Examiners should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the External Examiner to establish whether the situation can be resolved;
- 2.8.5 Should it prove impossible to resolve the situation satisfactorily, the Head of Department should write to the Deputy Warden, to request the early termination of the appointment.

3 Induction of External Examiners

- 3.1 On confirmation of their appointment, all External Examiners will receive a letter of appointment stating:
 - 3.1.1 The award bearing programme(s) for which they have been appointed;
 - 3.1.2 The period of appointment and starting date;
 - 3.1.3 If more than one External Examiner is appointed to the programme, an explanation of the roles assigned to each appointee.
 - 3.1.4 The fee they should receive and an explanation of Goldsmiths' position with regard to the deduction of tax at source, etc
 - 3.1.5 A request for their NI number;
 - 3.1.6 A specification that attendance at Exam Boards and the submission of an annual written report be a condition of appointment and payment;
 - 3.1.7 The ways in which the College will make use of their personal data, including any comments they make about the performance of students, either individually or generally in their reports and, in particular, that their name, position and institution will be included within student handbooks.
 - 3.1.8 An explanation that, if they so wish, they may, in the case of serious concerns make a separate, confidential report to the Warden.
- 3.2 The following information will also be included with the letter of appointment:
 - 3.2.1 A copy of the previous External Examiner's report (where applicable)
 - 3.2.2 An extract from the Assessment Regulations setting out the role and duties of the Board of Examiners.
 - 3.2.3 A link to Goldsmiths web pages setting out details of its external examination processes

- 3.2.4 Goldsmiths guidelines on the appointment and duties of External Examiners, and their role in moderation.
- 3.2.5 Student regulations.
- 3.2.6 A copy of the programme specification.
- 3.2.7 A copy of the student handbook.
- 3.2.8 Annual report form.
- 3.2.9 Travel expenses claim form

3.3 The External Examiner will also receive from the Chair of the Board of Examiners:

- 3.3.1 A full and detailed briefing/induction on the regulations for the programme covered by the Board to which they have been appointed and on the departmental learning and teaching strategy;
- 3.3.2 A full and detailed briefing on their role in relation to the internal examiners and the assessment process;
- 3.3.3 The date, time and venue where the meeting of the Board of Examiners will take place

3.4 Briefing at Goldsmiths

- 3.4.1 External Examiners to programmes leading to validated awards of Goldsmiths delivered at partner institutions will be required to attend a briefing at Goldsmiths during the autumn term.

3.5 Mentoring Scheme

- 3.5.1 For new External Examiners with no previous experience in the role, Goldsmiths operates a mentoring scheme in the first year of appointment.
- 3.5.2 The mentor should be agreed prior to the appointment of the new External Examiner and should be a current, experienced External Examiner of Goldsmiths who has agreed to act in this role
- 3.5.3 Once appointed, the new External Examiner should be asked to contact the current appointee, either telephonically or by email, who can brief them on the background to the programme and their experience over their period of office.

- 3.5.4 Both the new External Examiner and the mentor will be sent each other's details and asked to make contact. The mentor is expected to be prepared to offer general advice, either telephonically or by email. The type of issues that they might be asked to offer guidance on could include: dealing with draft examination papers; moderating and commenting on assessment; offering advice to the examination Board; completion of the annual report as well as general discussions about external examining experiences and common scenarios that may arise.
- 3.5.5 If the mentee or mentor experience any problems in the operation of the scheme, they should contact the Quality Office who will attempt to resolve the issue.
- 3.5.6 Following completion of the year, both mentor and mentee are asked to comment on their experience of the scheme within their annual reports.

4 Role and Responsibilities of External Examiners

4.1 Goldsmiths requires its External Examiners to assist in ensuring and enhancing the academic integrity, inherent fairness and currency of awards made in its name and the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students on its programmes. It seeks to facilitate this process by enabling External Examiners to comment freely, and in detail, on all issues associated with the assessment processes which determine who shall receive awards.

4.2 In order to meet the aims of ensuring the standards of awards and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, the role and responsibilities of the External Examiner are as follows:

4.3 Approval of Draft Examination Papers

4.3.1 External Examiners are asked to give advice on all modes of assessment that count towards an award, specifically including approval of the form and the content of examination papers, to ensure that all students are assessed fairly in relation to the syllabus and assessment regulations.

4.3.2 Chairs of Boards are responsible to the Head of Department for sending draft examination papers to the External Examiner(s) for approval.

4.4 Moderation of Assessments

- 4.4.1 External Examiners have the right to see all assessed work. Their primary role, however, is to attest to the general standards of work achieved as represented by each classification.
- 4.4.2 A selection of assessed work should be made available to the External Examiner. This should include all Firsts / Distinctions, borderlines and fails and a selection from each classification. It is expected that the total sample of work would typically be no less than 10% of the total, or a minimum of 10 items of assessed work. For programmes with larger cohorts, Chairs of Boards of Examiners shall liaise directly with External Examiners to decide on an appropriate sample. The process of internal moderation that has been employed in marking the work should be set out clearly for the External Examiner.
- 4.4.3 External Examiners may also be asked to attend exhibitions, degree shows, performances etc. where appropriate.
- 4.4.4 It is emphasised that External Examiners must not be used to second mark but are asked to provide an independent overview of the consistency of approaches to assessment. As such the standards of Internal Examiners' marking are of more concern than the individual marks attained by each student. If an External Examiner considers that there is any inappropriate marking for a particular unit, they may request that the marks for each student should all be reconsidered and the marks for individual students may not be amended other than in the context of such a reconsideration of the entire unit.
- 4.4.5 The Chair of the Board of Examiners for a subject area will determine the distribution of duties between External Examiners.

4.5 Attendance at Boards of Examiners

- 4.5.1 It is a requirement that an External Examiner and, where appointed, an Intercollegiate Examiner should be present whenever a Board of Examiners meets for the purpose of recommending an award of Goldsmiths or of the University of London. No qualification should be awarded without participation in the examining process by at least one External Examiner. However, finalists taking re-examinations in August/September may be recommended for award by action of the Chair of the Board of Examiners concerned without a separate meeting so long as the prior approval of the External Examiner(s) has been obtained.
- 4.5.2 Chairs of Boards of Examiners should ensure that dates for meetings are arranged, normally on the occasion of the previous year's meeting, and that External Examiners are informed of the time and date of meetings.
- 4.5.3 If, because of illness or accident, no External Examiner can be present at a meeting, the Board of Examiners may proceed provided the External Examiner is available at the time of the meeting by telephone if required.

- 4.5.4 If this is not possible, the meeting may proceed if all of the following conditions are met:
- the External Examiner has completed all moderating duties
 - s/he has presented a written report by the time of the start of the meeting
 - s/he has agreed that the meeting may proceed with these conditions in their absence
 - any decision which would, in the presence of the External Examiner, have been referred to him/her, should be deferred to Chair's action to enable the Chair to speak with the External Examiner at a later point
 - a senior member of the Assessment Office, or their representative will be present at the meeting in order to provide procedural guidance if necessary.

4.6 Conduct of Boards of Examiners

- 4.6.1 The full description of the regulations governing the operation of Boards of Examiners may be found within the Regulations for Taught Programmes and the Guidance and Procedures for the Conduct of Boards of Examiners contained within the Goldsmiths Academic Manual
<https://gold.ac.uk/gam/taught-programmes/examination-boards/>
- 4.6.2 The Chair of the Board of Examiners should provide information and guidance, but the decisions are taken by the Board as a whole. If there is a controversial issue, the different viewpoints should be heard, and if necessary a vote taken, in which External Examiners should each have a single vote, along with all other voting members. The Chair has a casting vote. If External Examiners wish to comment during the course of a Board, they should always be allowed to do so, but in any event they should be invited to make comments at the end, and thanked for their work.
- 4.6.3 At the conclusion of the meeting the Chair and External Examiners must sign the appropriate documentation.
- 4.6.4 In rare instances, an external examiner may be unwilling to endorse the decision of the Board. In such circumstances every attempt should be made to resolve the disagreement through discussion. If it proves impossible to reach agreement, the Chair of the Board should refer the matter to the Head of Quality who will attempt to negotiate an agreement. Should this prove to be unsuccessful then the Pro-Warden (Learning, Teaching and Enhancement) should be asked to investigate the disagreement. Notwithstanding the desirability of obtaining the external examiners' endorsement, the decisions of the Board are taken by the Board as a whole and will remain valid without this so long as agreed by the majority of members

4.7 Report

4.7.1 External Examiners are required to make annual reports on the form designed for this purpose, which should be submitted electronically, within a week of the Board of Examiners, to the Quality Office. They are free to make any comments they wish.

4.7.2 External Examiners should be aware that comments they write in these reports are routinely made available to student representatives on departmental boards and can be viewed electronically on the V.L.E. External Examiners are therefore advised against mentioning individual students by name in reports, or including any other comments from which individual candidates are likely to be identifiable. In particular they are asked to report on:

- whether the academic standards set for the awards, or part thereof, are appropriate;
- whether the assessment processes rigorously and fairly measure student achievement and whether they have been conducted within the regulations and guidance;
- whether the standards of student performance in the programmes or parts of programmes which they have been appointed to examine are appropriate;
- whether the standards and student achievements are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions;
- good practice they have identified or opportunities to enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided to students.

4.7.3 They are also invited to make observations on the curriculum; course structure; teaching; the design and structure of assessment; general procedures and the extent to which comments made in previous reports have been taken on board.

4.7.4 They are asked to give an overview of their term of office (when concluded)

4.7.5 In exceptional cases, if External Examiners have serious concerns about the academic standards or quality of provision or wish to raise an issue of a confidential nature, they may send a separate, confidential report directly to the Warden.

4.7.6 If, having exhausted all the internal procedures including having made a report to the Warden, an External Examiner still has a serious concern, they can invoke the Quality Assurance Agency's Concerns scheme:
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/how-to-make-a-complaint>
or inform the relevant PSRB.

4.7.7 External Examiners should not be paid any expenses, other than travelling expenses prior to receipt of the annual report.

4.7.8 Goldsmiths will reimburse reasonable travel and subsistence expenses incurred by External Examiners in connection with their duties within the limits set out in its Expenses, Travel and Subsistence Policy.

4.8 Programme Amendments

4.8.1 As syllabuses are regularly updated, the views of current External Examiners are sought as part of the process of approval of amendments to taught courses and programmes

5 Consideration of External Examiners' Reports

5.1 Following receipt of the reports, they are read and annotated in the Quality Office to highlight comments or suggestions to which a specific response is required and examples of good practice on which they may wish to enlarge, though departments.

5.2 In addition to the above departments may comment on any other aspect of the report they wish, correct any factual errors or misunderstandings and should thank outgoing External Examiners for their service. It is important that the dialogue with the External is undertaken in a constructive manner.

5.3 Departments may wish to discuss the report in person with the External Examiner. However, there should always be a formal written response to each report.

5.4 The response may be from either the Chair of the Board of Examiners, the Programme Co-ordinator or the Head of Department, but in any event must be authorised by the Head of Department.

5.5 Responses are then returned to the Quality Office where they are read in conjunction with the reports and sent to the External Examiners.

- 5.6 External Examiners' Reports should be considered by Departmental Learning and Teaching Committees and should form a part of the documentation used for Annual and Periodic Programme Review.
- 5.7 External Examiners' reports and Departmental responses are analysed by the Quality Assurance Manager, who ensures that any issues which require immediate action or clarification are addressed.
- 5.8 The Quality Assurance Manager prepares an annual digest of issues for consideration by the College's Quality and Standards Sub-Committee.